

# Post Adoption Questions and Answers

Answers to questions  
about the adoption  
support program, and  
resources that may be  
available to assist you in  
raising your child.





# Introduction



CONGRATULATIONS on your decision to adopt. You have established, through adoption, an emotional, social, and legal relationship with your child.

Raising a child can be challenging. In 1971 the Washington State Legislature passed the Adoption Support Demonstration Act, giving the Department of Social and Health Services authority to establish an Adoption Support Program to make adoptions possible for children with special needs.

Children's Administration provided adoption support services by entering into a contract with you prior to finalizing the adoption. This contract allows us to provide post adoption services for medical, counseling, and if agreed upon a monthly cash payment to help you provide for the special needs of your child.

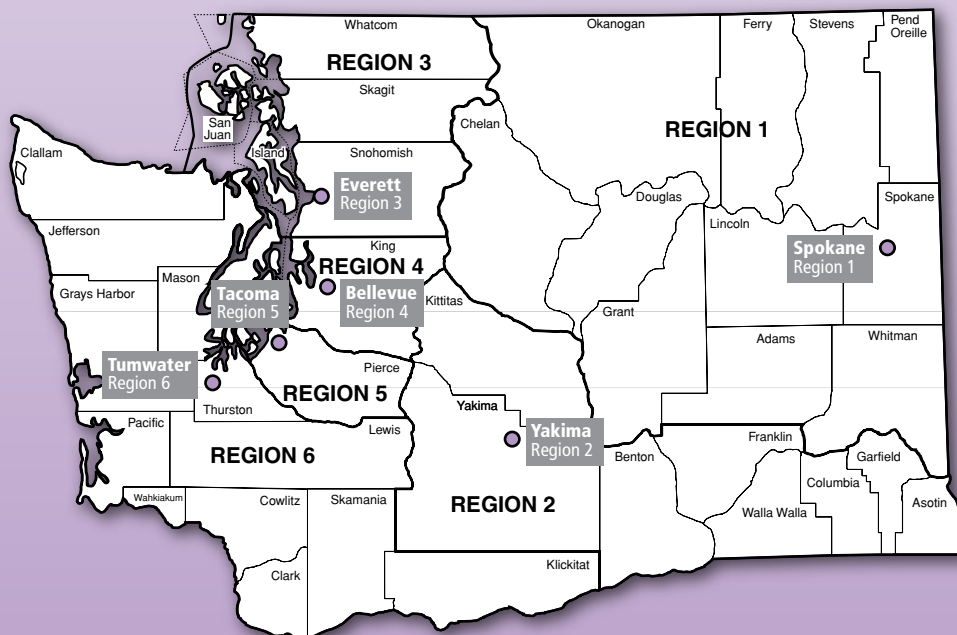
This booklet will help you find answers to questions about the adoption support program and identify potential community resources that may be available to assist you in raising your child. Your regional adoption program consultant is also available to answer questions regarding the program's benefits.

## Questions and Answers

### Contacting Adoption Support Staff

**Q: Who should I contact when I have a question about my agreement or services?**

**A:** Contact persons are available in six regions of the state. The map below indicates the cities where the offices are located in each of the six regions. You may reach the office responsible for your adoption support agreement by calling 1-800-562-5682. Listen carefully to the recorded message when it asks if you would like to speak to your regional adoption support program consultant. Enter the region's number where you currently reside. For example, if Yakima is the place where you reside, press 2. If you live out of state, contact the office that placed your child for adoption.





## The Adoption Support Agreement

### **Q: What is the adoption support agreement?**

**A:** The adoption support agreement is a legal contract between you and the Department of Social and Health Services. The agreement identifies the terms and conditions that both you and the department must follow for participation in the adoption support program.

### **Q: When does the agreement become effective?**

**A:** Unless otherwise stated in the agreement, the contract takes effect the next the month after the adoption is finalized.

### **Q: When does the agreement end?**

**A:** The agreement ends when:

- 1) The adoptive child reaches age 18 (unless the child is still a full time student working toward a high school diploma or GED).
- 2) In the event of the death of parents or the child.
- 3) You are no longer legally or financially responsible for the child.

### **Q: Will I receive a notice regarding termination of the program before my child turns 18?**

**A:** You may receive a notice advising that the agreement will end on the child's 18th birthday. It is your responsibility to contact the adoption support program at least 90 days before your child's eighteen birthday. Adoption Support benefits will automatically stop on the child's 18th birthday unless the program hears from you.

Adoption Support Agreement Continued...

**Q: What if my child is 18 and is still a full time high school student or working full-time toward the completion of a GED certificate?**

**A:** An 18 year old who is still a full time high school student or working toward the completion of a GED certificate will remain on the program if, before the child turns 18, the parents requests that adoption support continue and a letter is received from the school that states that the child is a full time student and an expected date of graduation is provided.

**Q: May the agreement be reviewed or changed at any time?**

**A:** Agreements are reviewed every five years. However, at any time there is a change in family circumstances or the child's condition, a request to revise the agreement may be made in writing to your adoption support program consultant. Your program consultant will advise you as to what is needed.

**Q: What changes in circumstance require that I immediately notify the regional adoption support program consultant?**

**A:** Notify the regional program consultant immediately when:

- The child is no longer living in your home
- You are no longer legally responsible for the child
- There is a change in permanent address
- The child's high school graduation date will be extended past his or her 18th birth date
- The child or parent dies
- There is a delay in completing the five (5) year review
- There is a change in marital status of the parents
- A change in legal or physical custody of the child

**Q: What is involved in the five year review process?**

**A:** The process includes a review of your description of the changes in your family circumstances or the child's condition and if necessary, your request for a change in the terms of the adoption support agreement. The review requires a copy of your current income tax return and a well child check.

At least 90 days prior to the review date you should receive a review packet from the office providing adoption support service in your region. The packet will contain a cover letter explaining the review process, a review form asking for an explanation of any changes or if you would like the agreement to remain the same and a form to give to your medical provider for the well child check indicated above. In addition you will be asked to provide a copy of your current IRS 1040.



*TIP: Parents should have all pertinent documentation regarding the child's special needs at the time the request for a modification/review is made. Obtaining necessary letters from doctors and/or other professionals can take months, so be sure to give yourself enough time.*

It may be helpful to create a family budget and document what resources are going directly to the special needs of the child, but the department cannot require receipts from adoptive parents. Obviously, a monthly subsidy is not going to cover all the child's needs, but going through the process of determining the expenses associated with the child special needs will help when talking with agency personnel during the modification/review meeting. *(Excerpt from North American Council on Adoptable Children)*





## Program Benefits

### Monthly Cash Payment

**Q: Does the adoption support program cover all the costs of raising a child?**

**A:** As the child's parent you are financially responsible for the needs of your child. The adoption support program should combine with your resources to assist you in covering the ordinary and special needs of the child. The extent of assistance needed by you to help meet the needs of the child is determined through discussion and negotiation between the adoptive parents and the Adoption Support Program staff. The amount decided upon must not exceed the amount the child would receive if the child was in foster care.

**Q: What should I consider when negotiating the monthly cash payment?**

**A:** When you sit down to negotiate your child's subsidy agreement, there are two factors that can be considered:

- The expenses that address the special needs of the child
- The circumstances of the family

The needs of the child pertain to his or her special medical, physical, or emotional needs. "Family circumstances" have been defined by the federal Children's Bureau as meaning a family's ability to incorporate a child's needs into the family circumstances. Income, debt, housing, transportation, space, family size, parental occupations, parental health needs, the needs of other family members, climate, and any number of other factors must all be looked at together. There is no set formula in determining monthly cash payments.

It is important to remember that the monthly cash payment can be changed through modification of the agreement, if the child's needs change. You do not



need to negotiate based on what you anticipate will be problems as the child ages. Many families do not need or take a monthly cash payment until a few years after the child is adopted. As long as an agreement is in place before the adoption is finalized, the agreement can be modified to help meet the needs of the child.

**Q: What benefits other than a monthly cash payment is provided through the adoption support program?**

**A:** All children receiving Adoption Support are eligible for Medical and Dental benefits through Medicaid, pre authorized assistance with counseling expenses (referred to as therapeutic services), one time payment reimbursement for adoption finalization costs, and training.

## **Medical**

**Q: What types of services does Medicaid cover?**

**A:** Adoption Support Medicaid covers the services listed below:

- Community Mental Health Centers
- Dental
- Doctors/Providers
- Emergency Room
- EPSDT (checkups and preventative care for children up to age 21)
- Eyeglasses and eye exams
- Home health services
- Interpreter services for medical care
- Medical equipment and supplies
- Prescriptions
- Psychiatric services
- Surgery
- Transportation

Some services have limitations. For more information, call the Medical Assistance helpline: 1-800-562-3022.

**Q: How do I get medical services through Medicaid?**

**A:** Your child will receive a Client Service card from Medicaid after the adoption has been finalized.

Program Benefits Continued...



**Q: Why do I need a Client Service card?**

**A:** Your child's medical ID card confirms that the child is on Medical Assistance. It tells doctors and other medical providers what medical services the child is eligible for, and it tells them DSHS Medical Assistance will pay for these services. You will need to show the card every time you obtain medical care or mental health services and when you pick up prescription medicines for your child.

**Q: Does the card have an expiration date?**

**A:** Your child's card is good until your adoption assistance contract ends. As long as the child is receiving Medical Assistance, the card will remain active. This card lists the people in your family or household who can be eligible for medical services through Medical assistance – no one else may use it.

**Q: What if there are mistakes on my client service card?**

**A:** Check your child's card carefully to make sure everything on the card is correct. If anything on the card is wrong or needs to be changed, call your Adoption Support Program Consultant.

**Q: What if I lose my child's client service card, or don't get the new one on time?**

**A:** If you lose your card, call the Medical Assistance helpline at 1-800-562-3022 or the Adoption Support Program Consultant. Also, call right away if you don't receive a card in the mail, or don't get your new card on time.

**Q: Can my child receive private insurance and Medicaid?**

**A:** You are encouraged to enroll your child on your personal insurance. Your personal insurance is primary and Medicaid is secondary. This means that you must first look to your insurance for payment when your child needs medical services. If there are remaining costs and those costs are less than what Medicaid would have paid, Medicaid will pay the remaining amount.

**More Information about Medicaid:****ABCD – Dental care for babies and young children**

Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) is a dental program for young children up to six years old. Call Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies at 1-800-322-2588 to find a dentist in your area.

**Getting Medications**

In most cases, there is no co pay. Just take your prescription and medical ID card to the pharmacy.

**Dental Care**

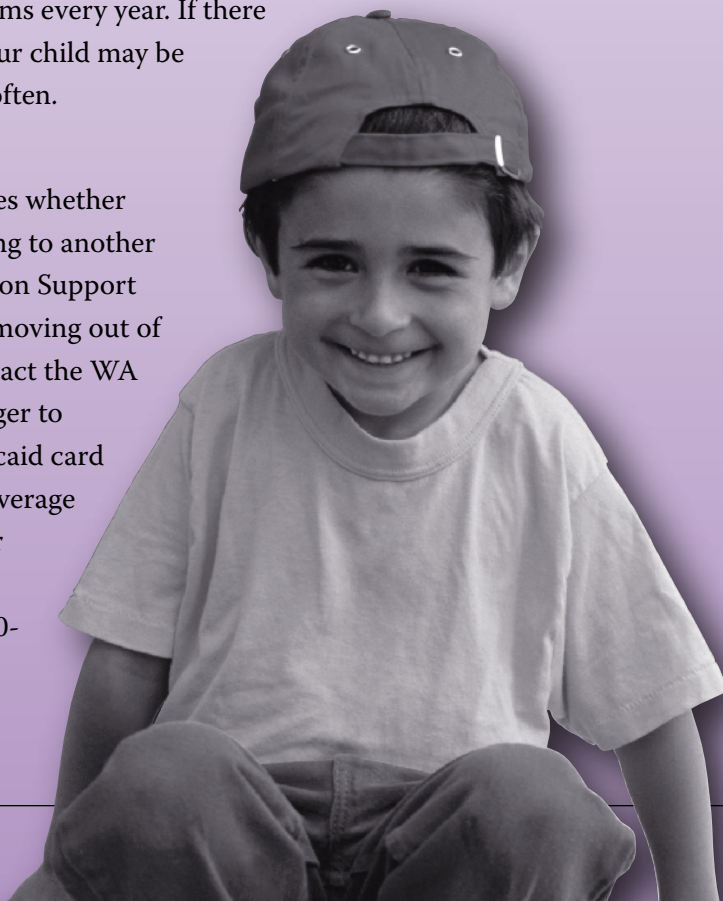
In some counties finding a dentist can be difficult. If you need help finding a dentist or transportation to the dentist, call the Medical Assistance helpline for a list of dentists in your area who take Medicaid.

**Eye Exams and Eyeglasses**

Your child can get eye exams and eyeglasses, including replacement glasses. Children can get eye exams every year. If there is a medical problem, your child may be able to get exams more often.

**Things to remember:**

When changing addresses whether within the state or moving to another state, notify your Adoption Support Program Consultant. If moving out of state, you must also contact the WA ICAMA Program Manager to insure your child's Medicaid card will continue without coverage gaps. You can reach your WA ICAMA Program Manager by calling 1-800-562-5682, enter 3.



Program Benefits Continued...

*If your child is turning 18 and is still in school, they may be eligible for an extension. Call your Adoption Support Program Manager or the WA ICAMA Office for details.*

### Therapeutic Services

#### **Q: How do I find the right therapist?**

**A:** Identifying prospective therapists. It is important that parents take the time to find a mental health provider who has the experience and expertise required to address their children's needs effectively. Professionals with adoption knowledge and experience are best suited to help families identify connections between problems and adoption and to plan effective treatment strategies. At a minimum, a therapist should:

- Be knowledgeable about adoption and the psychological impact of adoption on children and families
- Be experienced in working with adopted children and their families
- Know the types of help available for adoption-related issues and problems
- Have received training in working with adoptive families

Interviewing prospective therapists. Using the recommendations that you gather, you can call prospective therapists or schedule an initial interview to find out basic information. Some therapists will offer an initial brief consultation that is free of charge. You should start by giving the clinician a brief description of the concern or problem for which they need help. The following are some questions to discuss:

1. What is your experience with adoption and adoption issues? (You should be specific about the adoption issues that impact the problem, such as open adoption, transracial adoption, search for birth relatives, children who have experienced abuse or institutionalization, children with attachment difficulties.)
2. How long have you been in practice, and what degrees, licenses, or certifications do you have?
3. What continuing clinical training have you had on adoption issues?
4. Do you include parents and other family members in the therapeutic process?
5. Do you prefer to work with the entire family or only with the children?
6. Do you give parents regular reports on a child's progress?
7. Can you estimate a timeframe for the course of therapy?
8. What approach to therapy do you use?

9. What changes in the daily life of the child and family might we expect to see as a result of the therapy?
10. Do you work with teachers, juvenile justice personnel, daycare providers, and other adults in the child's life, when appropriate?

There are other practical considerations when choosing a therapist. You should be sure to ask about:

- Coverage when the therapist is not available, especially in an emergency
- Appointment times and availability
- Fees and whether the therapist accepts specific insurance, adoption subsidy medical payments, or Medicaid reimbursement payments (if applicable)

### **Working With a Therapist**

If the child is the identified client in therapy, the family's involvement and support for the therapy is critical to a positive outcome for the child. An adoption-competent therapist will value the participation of adoptive parents. Traditional family therapists not familiar with adoption issues may view the child's problems as a manifestation of overall family dysfunction. They may not take into account the child's earlier experiences in other care settings and may view adoptive parents more as a part of the problem than the solution. Adoption-competent therapists know that the adoptive parents will be empowered by including them in the therapeutic process and that no intervention should threaten the parent-child relationship.



### Program Benefits Continued...

Your commitment to the therapy may also contribute to the success of the therapeutic process. For instance, parents are obligated to keep scheduled appointments. Parents should refrain from using therapy sessions as punishment for a child's misbehavior. Family members must communicate regularly with the therapist and ensure that the therapist has regular feedback about conditions at home. The success of therapy depends heavily on open and trusting communication.

You may want to request an evaluation meeting with the therapist 6 to 8 weeks after treatment begins and regular updates thereafter. Evaluation meetings will help all parties evaluate the progress of treatment and offer the opportunity to discuss the following:

- Satisfaction with the working relationship between the therapist and family members
- Progress toward mutually agreed-upon goals for treatment approaches and desired outcomes
- Progress on problems that first prompted the request for treatment
- The therapist's tentative diagnosis (usually necessary for insurance reimbursement)
- The therapist's evaluation of the whether therapy can improve the situation that prompted the treatment chance that therapy can improve the situation that prompted treatment (information courtesy of Child Welfare Information Gateway)

### **Q: How do I access therapeutic services?**

**A:** You may use the child's client service card to purchase counseling from a Medicaid provider or you may use the counseling services of a provider of your choosing when such services have been pre-authorized by your adoption support program manager. You must first apply to your primary insurance.

After you have selected a therapist call or write the adoption support program manager to ask for a pre-authorization for services form. The program consultant will advise you of the adoption support rates and mail the form to you. Complete section I of the form and send it to your therapist. The therapist is required to send the form to the adoption support program manager. The adoption support program manager will then mail a copy back to you indicating that the service has been approved. Three sessions are pre approved to allow your child and you to get acquainted with the therapist and allow the therapist to assess your child's needs and develop a treatment plan.



The treatment plan shall be focused on addressing the child's needs, behaviors, and interaction with his or her family. Marital or individual therapy for you or other children in the family is not covered.

Therapeutic services will only be authorized for one therapist at a time unless a provider is required for a different service. For example: a child may be seeing a therapist for weekly therapeutic sessions and also seeing a psychiatrist once a month for medication management.

## Education

**Q: Are there any educational programs specifically available for my child after high school?**

**A:** The Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) program is available for youth who were in foster care and adopted after age 16.

- Provides financial assistance (based on need up to \$5,000 annually toward the cost of attendance) for education or vocational training after high school
- Individualized award unique to each student

Youth will need to remain in good academic standing and show they are making progress towards a degree or certificate.

- Can be used nationwide
- Available to current and former foster youth (who are/were dependents) up to age 21 who have been accepted into or enrolled in a degree, certificate or other program at an accredited school
- Youth enrolled prior to age 21 can continue to receive until age 23
- Youth adopted after age 16 can also participate in this program
- No formal application deadline. However four priority deadlines do occur:
  - January 1
  - March 1
  - June 1
  - August 1

*Applications received after priority deadlines will receive funding based on availability.*

- Youth must complete an application and have applied to a post secondary institution

Program Benefits Continued...

ETV awards cannot be made until student receives confirmation of financial aid award and sends documents:

- to the ETV Program
- Youth need to reapply every year for the ETV Program

For more information call 1-877-4EDUETV or email: ETVWASH@dshs.wa.gov

## Adoption Finalization Costs

### **Q: How may I receive assistance with adoption finalization costs?**

**A:** Adoption finalization costs are one time expenses incurred in finalizing the adoption, such as the attorney fees, court filing fees, physicals, and home-studies. To receive reimbursement for these expenses, you must apply prior to the adoption being finalized. Maximum reimbursable costs are \$1,500 per child. Payment is made once the adoption has finalized and is based upon actual costs up to the amount specified in the agreement.

### **Q: What is required for proof of payment?**

**A:** Reimbursement will be made after your regional program consultant receives the following:

- Signed copy of the adoption decree, and
- Proof that bills listed in the agreement were paid. Verification may include a copy of a canceled check or invoice marked “paid” from your attorney.

## Training

### **Q: May I receive reimbursement for trainings?**

**A:** Your family is entitled to one training per year. You must receive approval from the adoption support program consultant prior to attending the training. The training must be relevant to the issues of the adopted child. Registration fees plus travel and per diem may be reimbursed. Travel and per diem rates will be the same as for state employees. Generally out of state travel is not authorized except to bordering states. Child care is not covered.



## Additional Information

### **Q: Do I have the right to a hearing if I disagree with a decision made by the program?**

**A:** You may request a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) if the following decisions were made by the program:

- Your child's initial eligibility for the adoption support program was denied;
- The program manager failed to respond with reasonable promptness to a written application or request for services;
- A request to change the level of payment or service in the agreement was denied;
- Decision to increase or decrease the level of monthly cash payment was made without your consent;
- A request for adoption finalization costs was denied;
- Your child was terminated from the program and you did not agree.

### **Q: How do I request a hearing?**

**A:** You will be notified in writing regarding program decisions and informed of your right to a hearing, the deadline for requesting a hearing, whether your request for hearing must be in writing, where to send the request, and whether you may make the request orally. You may also write to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at:

Office of Administrative Hearings  
PO Box 42489  
Olympia, WA 98504-2489

All OAH offices have toll-free numbers. It is best to call the office closest to your location. Check your phone book under heading State, Administrative Hearings office for the office closest to your location.

### **Q: What happens after I request a hearing?**

**A:** The Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) schedules a hearing and sends out a Notice of Hearing with the date, time, and place of the hearing. Enclosed with the notice is important information about the hearing. Pay special attention to the enclosed brochure. **Read it all. Read it carefully.**

Next, the hearing representative from DSHS will contact the person who requested the hearing and any other interested party to discuss the case and try to resolve the disagreement. The DSHS representative's phone number is written on the Notice of Hearing. You may initiate contact as well.

Additional Information Continued...



If you wish to review your file and make copies of documents that you believe are relevant to the hearing, you should call the DSHS representative to arrange a time to do this.

Sometimes the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) will schedule a pre-hearing conference. These are usually held by phone. If the ALJ schedules a pre-hearing conference, instructions about what to expect will be included in the scheduling notice.

**Q: What if I want someone to represent me?**

**A:** You may represent yourself. You may also hire an attorney at your own expense or by another person. The Northwest Justice Project offers free legal advice to low income people at 1-888-201-1014 and TTY 1-888-201-9737 (Excerpts from Washington State Office of Administrative Hearing website – [www.oah.wa.gov](http://www.oah.wa.gov)) If you want to be represented, your representative must be at the hearing.

**Q: Once the adoption is finalized should I contact social security for a change of name on the child's social security card?**

**A:** Generally when a child is adopted, the Social Security Administration will assign another Social Security number if the adoptive parents request one. Alternatively, a replacement card with the child's new name can be issued.

New numbers would generally not be given to children who:

- Know they are adopted;
- Receive Social Security benefits or Supplemental Security Income payments;
- Have worked; or
- Are adopted by a step-parent or other relative.

In these situations, the administration will update the child's record with the new identifying information and issue a corrected card with the child's new name under the same number.

To apply for a new Social Security number for your child:

- Complete an Application For A Social Security Card (Form SS-5); and
- Show documents proving your child's:
  - U.S. citizenship;
  - Age; and
  - Identity.
- Show a document proving your identity.
- Take (or mail) your completed application and documents to your local Social Security office.

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. They cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

The Social Security Administration also needs evidence that establishes your relationship to the child if your name is not listed as the parent on the child's evidence of age. The adoption decree or the amended U.S. birth certificate can be used to establish your relationship.

The Social Security Administration will mail your child's number and card as soon as they have verified your documents with the issuing offices. (Excerpt from Social Security website: <http://www.ssa.gov/>)

Once you have received a new social security card for your child, mail a copy to the your adoption support program manager so the child's records may be updated.

**Q: What if my child may need out of home placement after adoption?**

**A:** Children Administrations provides an array of services and programs to help keep children in their own homes. You should contact your local Department of Children and Family Services. Don't forget to keep your regional adoption support program consultant informed of the child's status.

Additional Information Continued...

**Q: What is adoption tax credit?**

**A:** You may be able to take a tax credit for expenses paid to adopt a special needs child. Check with the IRS or your tax adviser to get more in depth and individual information.

**Q: Am I required to notify Adoption Support if I move?**

**A:** Yes, you must notify your adoption support program manager in writing if you move in order to maintain program services like medical, monthly cash payment, and participation in the five year review. Medicaid must be established with your new state of residence. This process may take some time so it is very important that we are notified at least 60-90 days in advance of your move. Washington State has a mutual agreement with most states to provide medical to adoptive families who have a contract through the adoption support program.

## When Moving Out of State

**Q: When does coverage for Medicaid begin in my new state?**

**A:** The Washington card will provide coverage to the end of that month and then be terminated. Coverage in your new state does not begin until the first of the following month.

*TIP: If your child requires monthly medication, make sure that you get enough to last through the end of the month.*

## Community Services/Supports

**Q: How do I find support groups?**

**A:** Support groups are being developed around the state that serve adoptive, guardianship, foster, and kinship caretakers. For information about these groups, contact your local Children's Administration office or the Foster Parent and Caregiver Support line at 1-800-301-1868. The following website provides information on support groups in other states: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/nad/index.cfm>.



## Online Resources

**Washington State Department of Social and Health**

**Services – No Wrong door** is a quick and easy web navigation tool for people needing information about social and health services, whether or not they are familiar with the organizational structure of DSHS.

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/basicneeds/>

**Medicaid Providers by practice and county:**

<http://imaa.dshs.wa.gov/sites/ISD/TSS/EDM/Lists/MAA%20Providers/All%20by%20County.aspx>

**Website for the Center for Adoption Medicine** at the University of Washington, our resource for medical and developmental issues in adoption and pediatrics.

<http://www.adoptmed.org/home>

**Access Washington:**

Website for State government agencies.

<http://www.access.wa.gov/>

**Parents Guide to Mental Health System:**

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/parentguide.shtml>

**A website for parents and children** providing activities and information for adopted children, giving them a sense of belonging to a wider adoption community.

<http://www.adoptionclubhouse.org/>

**North American Council on Adoptable Children:**

Provides adoption information and services for children in the United States foster care system.

<http://www.nacac.org/>

Online Resources Continued...

**National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome – Washington State:**

NOFAS Washington State is a source for support and resources for individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, their caregivers, and community providers.

<http://www.nofaswa.org>

**Child Welfare Information Gateway:**

Resources on all aspects of domestic and intercountry adoption, including adoption from foster care. Includes information for prospective and adoptive parents; information about searching for birth relatives; and resources for professionals on recruiting adoptive families, preparing children and youth, supporting birth parents, and providing post adoption services.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/index.cfm>

**Kinship Care in Washington State** offers information on social service resources.

[www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare)





*Washington State*  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

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**CA** Children's Administration

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